

# Father Emo steps down in Naples

## Attributes stress to various causes

By Lee Strong  
Senior staff writer

NAPLES — Father Eugene G. Emo resigned Sept. 22 as pastor of St. Januarius Church/Our Lady of the Grape Shrine, 1980 N. Main St.

His resignation came following diocesan investigation of allegations of mishandling of parish monies by individuals other than Father Emo, and of inadequate response by Father Emo into reports of possible financial improprieties.

Father Emo, who has been St. Januarius' pastor since 1987, also was accused of engaging in inappropriate behavior — including wrestling with young men.

According to Father Robert Ring, director of the diocesan Department of Priest Personnel, the investigation into the financial problems showed that while there "did seem to be some shift of parish collections, neither (Father Emo) nor anyone else on the staff was implicated as directly responsible."

Meanwhile, Father Ring continued, investigations into the rumors of inappropriate behavior did reveal "behavior that seemed inappropriate for a pastor in a community." But, he added, that behavior was not "overtly sexual" in nature.

Father Emo is currently at a center where he is being treated for "stress and related psychological concerns," Father Ring said. He declined to reveal the center's name.

The resignation was announced to the parish the weekend of Sept. 25-26. A letter from Father Emo was included in the parish bulletin on the weekend of Oct. 2-3.

In the letter, Father Emo attributed the stress he has undergone to a variety of causes, including the sudden death of his sister and a \$250,000 campaign for a new parish center. These and other "concerns," he noted, "have left me exhausted, clouded my judgment and hampered my efforts to be



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

## Prayer service kicks off pro-life siege

Coreen Christman holds her hands up in prayer at an Oct. 8 pro-life prayer rally at Cornerstone Christian Fellowship Church, 820 S. Clinton Ave., Rochester. The rally was held to kick off a weeklong protest outside Planned Parenthood's University Avenue clinic from Oct. 11-16. The prayer service featured guest speaker Rev. Johnny Hunter of Buffalo and rap-artist Michael Peace. The weeklong effort will include picketing and sidewalk counseling. In addition, a recreational vehicle parked outside Planned Parenthood will offer women with unplanned pregnancies alternatives to abortion.

(a) center of unity in the parish."

Father Ring said diocesan officials had not asked for Father Emo's resignation.

"While some substantial allegations were presented," Father Ring noted, "the investigation failed to verify most of the conclusions that had been drawn."

The diocese began investigating the situation in Naples when some parishioners presented diocesan officials with concerns about Father Emo's well-being and his handling of allegations that parish funds were being stolen.

The financial concerns had been brought to Father Emo's attention by the parish finance council, Father Ring explained. The council had noticed that the parish receipts were down, and that some parishioners had claimed that reporting of their contributions was inaccurate.

Father Emo failed to adequately address the concerns brought to him by

the finance committee, Father Ring observed.

The investigation did raise questions about missing funds, Father Ring acknowledged. But the amount of money that may have been involved — and the scarcity of substantial evidence — precluded filing charges against the implicated individual, who is not a member of the parish staff.

Meanwhile — as detailed in an editorial in the Oct. 6, 1993, edition of the *Naples Record* — rumors began circulating in Naples about Father Emo's actions. Among those rumors was a story concerning sexual activity and compromising photographs.

Father Ring said that although his investigations revealed such inappropriate actions as wrestling with young men as well as the use of handcuffs in some of the activities with the men, he had found no evidence that would substantiate sexual allegations. The personnel director said he was shown photographs of the handcuffs, but that


no one had produced pictures involving people.

As part of the investigation, Father Ring said he spoke with Father Emo and the young men involved.

Father Emo's future in the diocese will be decided after he completes treatment at the center, Father Ring said.

Father Charles Manning, pastor of St. Pius V Parish in Cohocton and Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Perkinsville, will serve as sacramental moderator at the Naples parish until January. Father William Geiger, CSsR, of the Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua will provide weekend coverage during that same span, Father Ring said.

From January to June of 1994, Father Philip Billotte, currently temporary administrator of St. Patrick Parish in Owego, will become temporary administrator of St. Januarius. Future staffing for the parish will be determined by June, 1994.



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